

# **COMMON BUTTONBUSH**

*Cephalanthus occidentalis* L.  
plant symbol = CEOC2

*Contributed by: USDA NRCS Plant Materials Program*



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## **Uses**

Buttonbush is an obligate wetland shrub suitable for wetland restoration, created wetlands, and riparian zones. It has exceptional wildlife benefits. The seed is eaten by eight species of waterfowl and the twigs by three species of mammals.

## **Status**

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

## **Description**

Buttonbush is a large, multi-stemmed shrub that grows to a mature height of twelve feet. It has opposite, entire leaves 2-6 inches long and 1-3 inches wide. They are glabrous and green above. The flowers occur in dense, round, 1 inch diameter clusters which bloom from June to September. The seed matures in the round clusters that resemble those of the sycamore tree. This plant spreads by seed dispersal and resulting seedling establishment.

## **Adaptation and Distribution**

The natural range of this shrub is from Florida to Mexico and north to Nova Scotia and Ontario. Buttonbush is best adapted to shorelines and swamps with saturated soil and full sunlight. It will tolerate water depths up to three feet. Flowering is poor in the shade or in dry soils.

For a current distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Website.

## **Establishment**

One year old seedlings or rooted cuttings can be established at a two foot spacing for erosion control, or a wider spacing for wetland mitigation or habitat development. Controlling competition during the first growing season is the biggest establishment challenge. Scalp the existing vegetation from a two foot diameter area on which the seedling is being established. Unrooted cuttings can be established by pushing cuttings into the soil one foot apart for erosion control or wider for mitigation or habitat development.

## **Management**

Buttonbush may be fertilized with a slow release fertilizer to enhance flowering and seed production. Plants on areas with fluctuating water levels may need debris cleared out of the canopy.

## **Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)**

'Keystone' (composite from PA, WV, NY) was released by the Big Flats, NY Plant Materials Center.

## **Prepared By & Species Coordinator:**

*USDA NRCS Northeast Plant Materials Program*

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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS <<http://plants.usda.gov>> and Plant Materials Program Web sites <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>.

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